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India won another global cricket tournament with a four-wicket victory over New Zealand in the Champions Trophy final.

Rohit Sharma led the 252-run chase with 76 runs. Sharma provided a fiery start to India's innings, with the India skipper hitting seven fours and three sixes. Hardik Pandya scored a run-a-ball 18, putting on a crucial 38 runs off 36 balls for the sixth wicket with Rahul. Sharma was named player of the match. It was India's 23rd win in 24 games across the last three men's ICC events stretching back to 2023 – the only loss coming against Australia in the 2023 Cricket World Cup final. India won the Twenty20 World Cup final against South Africa last year. Both sides have previously won this tournament.

India's previous success came in 2013 and it was runner-up to Pakistan in 2017. It also shared the trophy with Sri Lanka in 2002 after a rain-affected two-day final. New Zealand won the

Champions Trophy (then the ICC Knockout Trophy) in 2000 – it beat India in the final at Nairobi, Kenya. It remains the only limited-overs ICC trophy in the Black Caps' cabinet. All India's matches were played in Dubai after the Indian government refused permission for its team to go to official host Pakistan on security grounds. Almost all the Indian players contributed to the success of the



India won another global cricket tournament with a four-wicket victory over New Zealand in the Champions Trophy final.

team. The batters were brilliant, while the bowlers took wickets when it mattered the most. Meanwhile, Pakistan dropped captain Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam for the T20 series against New Zealand. Rizwan was retained as skipper for the three ODIs against New Zealand starting March 29, and the squad also included Babar. However, selectors have rung in several changes in the ODI squad

after Pakistan made an early exit from the Champions Trophy, losing to both New Zealand and India. After its last game was washed out against Bangladesh, it finished fourth in its group. Fast bowlers Haris Rauf and Shaheen Shah Afridi are part of the T20 squad but were dropped for the ODIs. Top-order batters Kamran Ghulam and Saud Shakeel were also dropped, but opener Abdullah Shafique was recalled after selectors ignored him for the Champions Trophy because he had made three successive ducks

in South Africa. In other sports, Lewis Hamilton has started his new innings with Ferrari in F1. Hamilton got behind the wheel of the new Ferrari SF-25 for the first time at the team's Fiorano test track. Thousands of fans – most clad in Ferrari red – had gathered outside the fences surrounding the track to get a glimpse of their new hero. Enjoy the action-packed edition of Cricket Today.

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X-30, Okhla Ind. Area, Ph-2, New Delhi-20,

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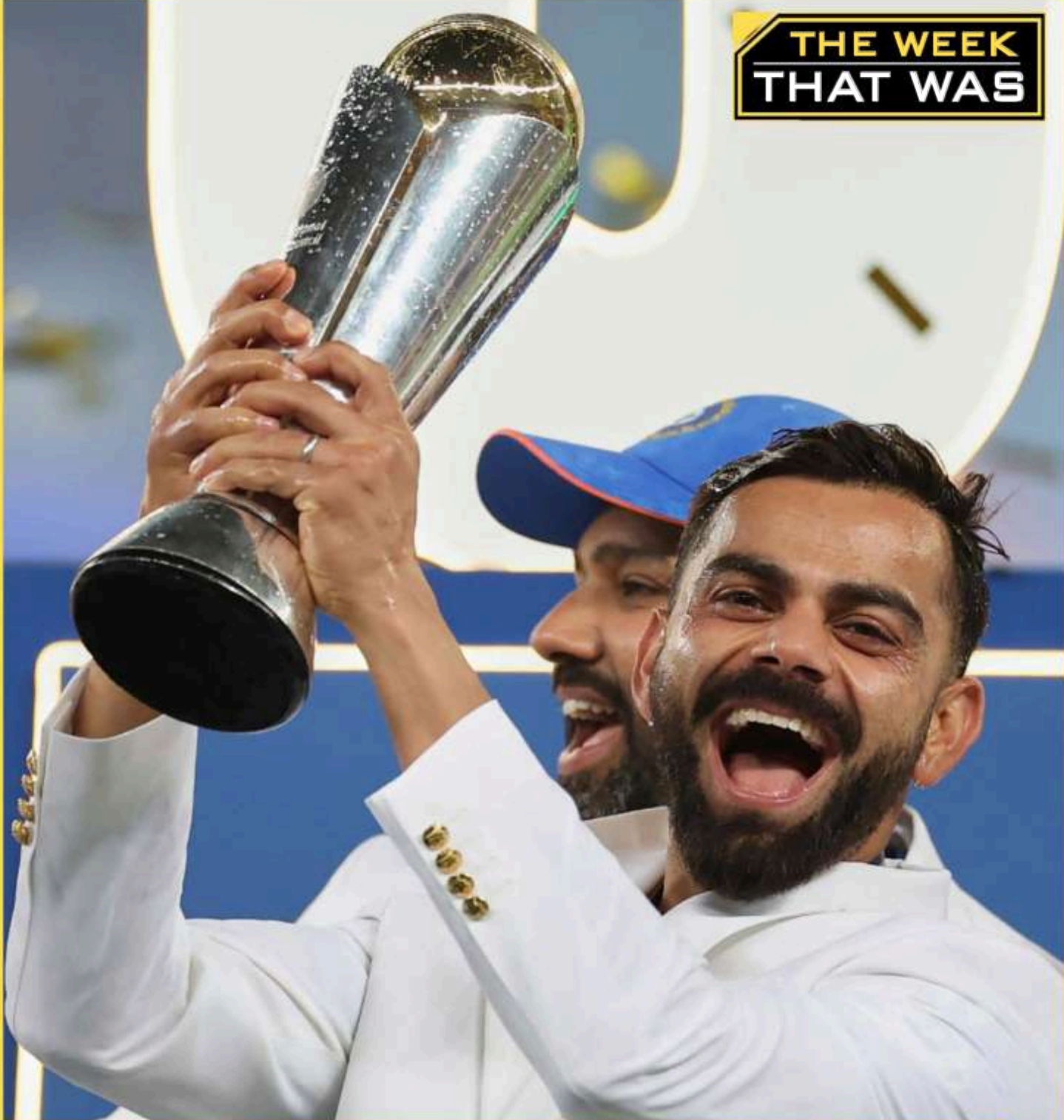
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THE WEEK THAT WAS



MAN OF THE MOMENT: India's captain Rohit Sharma poses with the winner's trophy after defeating New Zealand in the final ICC Champions Trophy cricket match at Dubai International Cricket Stadium.



KING ADDS ANOTHER SILVERWARE: India's Virat Kohli celebrates after India defeated New Zealand in the final ICC Champions Trophy 2025. He scored more than 200 runs in five matches.

THE WEEK THAT WAS



DANCING SHOES: Shreyas Rana and Harshit Rana shake their legs after the Men in Blue's victory over New Zealand in the final of the Champions Trophy.



TERRIFIC PERFORMANCE: Tomas Machac of the Czech Republic holds up his trophy after defeating Alejandro Davidovich Fokina of Spain in the final match at the Mexican Open tennis tournament in Acapulco.

THE WEEK THAT WAS



FERRARI DUO: Ferrari driver Lewis Hamilton of Britain smiles with his teammate Charles Leclerc of Monaco during a team presentation event in Milan.



IMPRESSIVE OUTING: Russell Henley holds the championship trophy after winning the Arnold Palmer Invitational at the Bay Hill golf tournament.

Cricket Buzz



“**"Pakistan cricket is its worst enemy"**

- Mickey Arthur reacts to the jungle-like situation of sub-continent team



FEEL PROUD OF ROHIT SHARMA

Rohit Sharma confirmed that he is not retiring from ODIs. He commented after leading the Men in Blue to success in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. With India defeating the Kiwis by 4 wickets in the final, there were speculations that the legendary batter would announce his retirement. Former South Africa captain AB de Villiers has supported Rohit and urged him to continue leading the side. He highlighted his winning percentage as a captain. AB de Villiers hailed Rohit for giving match-winning performances in ODIs after a poor Test series in Australia. "Indian fans should be proud of him. His form has been up and down across formats but when it comes to big matches, he makes impactful contributions," he concluded.



“**"They are out of my life, and I don't want to take their names"**

- Wasim Akram left fuming after Mohammad Hafeez questioned his legacy



YEH DIL MANNGE MORE

Team India all-rounder Hardik Pandya is unsatisfied after winning the two back-to-back ICC titles. The Men in Blue won the 2024 T20 World Cup and the Champions Trophy 2025, with Hardik playing a crucial role. Pandya said his goal is to win tournaments and add 5-6 more titles. "It has always been about winning titles. I said I was not done when we won the 2024 T20 World Cup. I still need 5-6 more trophies. I am happy that one more has been added to the trophy cabinet," Pandya was quoted as saying by the ICC. He will now lead Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League 2025.



KEVIN PIETERSEN UNVEILS DRAM BELL BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY BY ARDENT ALCOBEV

Mumbai, 4th February 2025: Ardent Alcobev, an emerging player in India's premium alcobev market, has unveiled Dram Bell, a luxury Blended Scotch Whisky, at an exclusive launch event held at Imara – Turf Club in Mumbai. The event was hosted by Kevin Pietersen, former England cricket captain and marquee investor in Ardent Alcobev, along with the co-founders. Bottled in Scotland, Dram Bell is available in two variants: the Premium variant, priced at Rs. 1,750, and the Reserve variant, priced at Rs. 2,450. Each bottle represents the perfect blend of heritage and modern

sophistication, offering a luxurious experience for whisky connoisseurs.

Expressing his enthusiasm for the launch, Kevin Pietersen shared his personal connection to the brand and the philosophy behind Dram Bell. "My investment in Ardent Alcobev is more than just a business decision; it's a reflection of my values. Throughout my career, whether on the cricket pitch or in other areas of life, I've always valued dedication, quality, and the pursuit of perfection. Ardent upholds this same commitment while making, which is visible in every part of Dram Bell. We also encourage drinking responsibly, for enjoyment, and not for excessive consumption, so that everyone can savour and enjoy the experience in moderation.

The evening also witnessed an exclusive Whisky Masterclass led by Iain Forteath, Master Blender at Ardent Alcobev. The interactive session provided attendees with a unique opportunity to taste various expressions of Dram Bell, while discovering the intricate art of whisky blending and tasting.

Commenting on the launch, Debashish Shyam, Co-Founder and Director of Ardent Alcobev, shared, "We are redefining India's premium whisky market with a blend that showcases unmatched quality and craftsmanship. With Kevin Pietersen as a strategic partner, we raise the brand's profile by bridging the gap between international acclaim and preference of Indian market. This approach caters to the discerning tastes of IMFL drinkers who seek sophistication without compromising on their taste. We are confident that it will appeal to whisky connoisseurs as we merge global standards with local tastes to shape the future of Indian whisky, catering to the evolving preferences of IMFL drinkers."

Dram Bell has been made available in Maharashtra from Nov 2024 and will be available at select retail and on-trade stores. The company will progressively expand distribution into other key markets in the North and South India.

About Ardent Alcobev Pvt. Ltd

Ardent Alcobev Pvt. Ltd. is an emerging player in India's premium alcoholic beverage market, founded as a joint venture between Rajasthan Liquor Ltd. (RLL) and industry veterans Debashish Shyam and Jatin Fredericks along with former English cricket captain Kevin Pietersen as a marquee investor. Ardent Alcobev is dedicated to building a portfolio of "bottled-in-origin" spirits that cater to the evolving tastes of the Indian consumer, offering global-quality products at affordable prices. The company aims to redefine the premium drinking experience in India as the market moves toward a more discerning consumer base. Ardent Alcobev will debut with Dram Bell Blended Scotch Whisky in Maharashtra in November 2024, with plans to expand its portfolio to other premium beverage categories.

5 PLAYERS WHO LED INDIA TO THE ICC CHAMPIONS TROPHY 2025 TITLE

Axar Patel may not have grabbed headlines like some of his teammates, but his contributions were invaluable. Throughout the tournament, he was India's go-to player whenever the team needed a stabilizing presence. His 29-run knock came...

BY CT CONTRIBUTOR

Winning a prestigious ICC tournament is never about individual brilliance alone—it takes a collective effort from key players to steer the team to glory. While every player in India's squad played their part in lifting the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, narrowing the list to just five standout performers is incredibly difficult. However, some contributions were simply

too impactful to overlook.

In a thrilling final against New Zealand, India successfully chased down 252 with six balls to spare despite a minor collapse after a strong opening stand. Axar Patel and Shreyas Iyer stabilized the innings before Ravindra Jadeja sealed the victory with a signature finish. Let's look at the five players who played a major role in India's path to glory.



1) AXAR PATEL: THE SILENT WARRIOR

Axar Patel may not have grabbed headlines like some of his teammates, but his contributions were invaluable. Throughout the tournament, he was India's go-to player whenever the team needed a stabilizing presence. His 29-run knock came at a critical juncture in the final, helping India recover from a mini-collapse. Over five innings, Axar scored 109 runs, frequently stepping up at No. 5 with composed innings that provided balance to the middle order. His ability to rotate the strike and find boundaries when needed made him a crucial asset. Additionally, he provided breakthroughs with the ball and controlled the run flow, finishing with 5 wickets in the tournament. His all-round performance was a defining factor in India's success.

2) SHREYAS IYER: THE CONSISTENT PERFORMER

Shreyas Iyer showcased why he is regarded as one of India's most dependable middle-order batsmen. His ability to absorb pressure and anchor the innings made him an essential part of the team's batting lineup. He amassed 243 runs in five innings, making him one of India's top scorers in the tournament. His 45 against Australia in the semi-finals helped India post a competitive total in a high-pressure game. In the final, his 48-run knock against New Zealand was another crucial contribution that ensured India remained on track in the chase. Iyer's temperament and ability to play according to the situation were instrumental in India's campaign, cementing his reputation as Mr. Consistent.



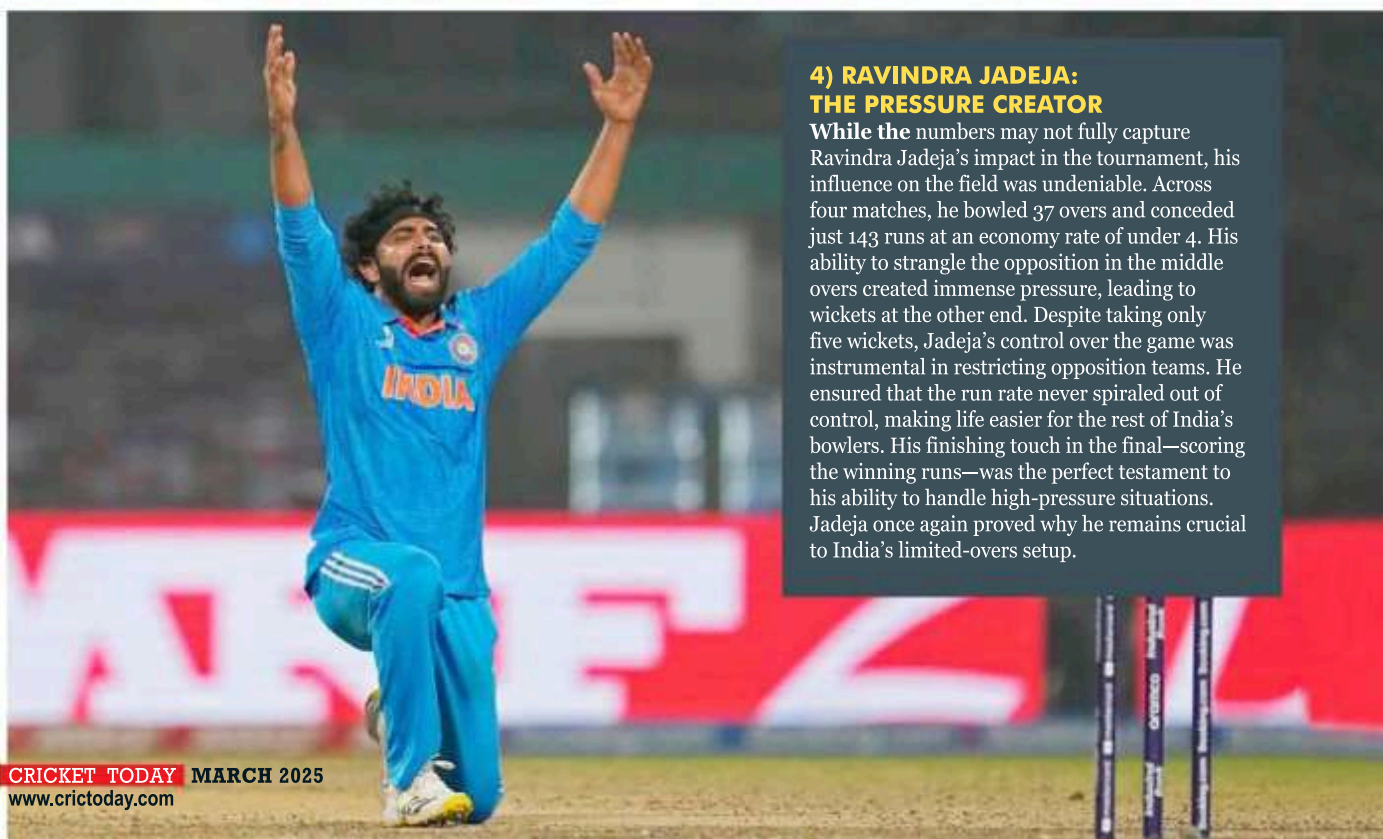


3) VIRAT KOHLI: THE KING'S IMPACT

Virat Kohli might not have left a mark in the final, but his performances leading up to it were nothing short of exceptional. He scored 218 runs in five innings and was the backbone of India's top order throughout the tournament. His finest moment came against Pakistan, where he played a masterful, match-winning century that dismantled their bowling attack. His 80-run knock in the semi-final against Australia further highlighted his ability to perform when it matters most. Kohli's experience, leadership, and ability to control the game played a vital role in guiding India to the final. His presence in the squad alone boosted the team's morale, making him an invaluable contributor to India's triumphant campaign.

4) RAVINDRA JADEJA: THE PRESSURE CREATOR

While the numbers may not fully capture Ravindra Jadeja's impact in the tournament, his influence on the field was undeniable. Across four matches, he bowled 37 overs and conceded just 143 runs at an economy rate of under 4. His ability to strangle the opposition in the middle overs created immense pressure, leading to wickets at the other end. Despite taking only five wickets, Jadeja's control over the game was instrumental in restricting opposition teams. He ensured that the run rate never spiraled out of control, making life easier for the rest of India's bowlers. His finishing touch in the final—scoring the winning runs—was the perfect testament to his ability to handle high-pressure situations. Jadeja once again proved why he remains crucial to India's limited-overs setup.





5) VARUN CHAKRAVARTHY: THE X-FACTOR

Varun Chakravarthi's impact was as dramatic as it was effective. Despite playing only three matches in the tournament, he picked up nine wickets, delivering match-defining performances each time he stepped onto the field. His biggest moment came against New Zealand in the group stage, where he claimed a sensational five-wicket haul, breaking the back of their batting lineup. In the semi-final against Australia, he struck twice, including the crucial wicket of Travis Head, a batsman who has troubled India on multiple occasions in the past. Again, in the final, he delivered another two-wicket burst that derailed New Zealand's progress. Chakravarthi's mystery spin gave India a major advantage, and his timely breakthroughs ensured India always had the upper hand in key matches.

India's Champions Trophy triumph in 2025 was a result of a well-rounded team effort, but these five players played defining roles in securing the title. Axar Patel's steady batting and all-round balance, Shreyas Iyer's consistency, Virat Kohli's big-match temperament, Ravindra Jadeja's relentless pressure, and Varun Chakravarthi's game-changing spells were all critical components of India's success.

Each player stepped up when the team needed them the most, proving that championship victories are not just about individual brilliance but about delivering when it matters the most. With this historic win, India reaffirmed its dominance in world cricket, and these five players will forever be remembered as the architects of the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy triumph.

3 KEY MOMENTS THAT DEFINED THE INDIA vs NEW ZEALAND CHAMPIONS TROPHY 2025 FINAL: CHECK OUT



For India, Kuldeep Yadav (2-40) and Varun Chakravarthy (2-45) were the pick of the bowlers. Despite India's consistent wickets, Bracewell's knock at the death was essential. NZ were about 20 runs short, as Santner mentioned afterwards, but credit...

BY CT CONTRIBUTOR

The Indian cricket team edged past New Zealand in a tense encounter by four wickets to claim the 2025 Champions Trophy title in Dubai. India claimed the prestigious ICC ODI event for the third time on Sunday. Credit should go to New Zealand for making this affair a stern contest with just 251 runs on the board. Both sides bowled plenty of spin on a slow surface in Dubai. India were eventual winners, finishing the tourney on a high and remaining unbeaten throughout. Rohit Sharma (76) and Shubman Gill (31) shared a massive opening stand worth 105 runs as India was looking to chase a target of 252. Rohit led the show with a rapid 41-ball fifty. From 105/0, India were reduced to 122/3. A quality stand from Shreyas Iyer and Axar Patel bailed India out before a composed knock from KL Rahul saw the side home. For New Zealand, Michael Bracewell picked

2/28.

Earlier, New Zealand elected to bat with Rachin Ravindra (37) and Will Young (15) sharing a positive 57-run stand. However, India's spinners made a comeback, removing both openers and Kane Williamson (11) in six overs. Daryl Mitchell played a hard-working hand to reach his fifty. Bracewell's blitz (53* from 40 balls) helped NZ reach 251/7.

For India, Kuldeep Yadav (2-40) and Varun Chakravarthy (2-45) were the pick of the bowlers. Despite India's consistent wickets, Bracewell's knock at the death was essential. NZ were about 20 runs short, as Santner mentioned afterwards, but credit to them for causing India issues.

Here are 3 key moments that defined the contest.





KULDEEP YADAV'S MASTERY A TURNING POINT

Credit should go to Rohit, who, after bringing on Chakravarthy, decided to hand Kuldeep the ball rather than his regular option, Axar Patel. Wrist-spin rather than finger spin did the trick even for the 1st wicket when Will Young was sent packing by Chakravarthy. Rohit sensed the same and gave Kuldeep a chance who came into this contest being the least effective spinner for India.

Rachin Ravindra was going well for NZ, and his fiery start ensured a swift opening stand. The southpaw has made rapid strides by delivering big in ICC events and Kuldeep was on the money on ball 1. A googly on middle, saw the batter fail to pick it as he went on the back foot to punch but saw the ball go through the bat-pad gap. Notably, the ball flicked the back leg before going on to crash the stumps. This was superb from Kuldeep, who helped India get rid of the dangerous Ravindra for 37 from 29 balls,

Kuldeep wasn't done there. He got another big fish in the form of Kane Williamson in the 2nd ball of his 2nd over. Kuldeep read Williamson well and tossed the ball up nicely to see the latter offer a catch while going for a drive. In his 1st over, Kuldeep almost got Williamson off a similar ball. Across six ODI innings, Kuldeep has got Williamson thrice at 18.33.

ROHIT AND GILL'S STAND SETS THE TONE FOR INDIA

India needed a fine start after NZ got to a respectable 251/7. The last time during the group stage clash, Kyle Jamieson and Matt Henry pegged India back, losing their front three wickets for just 30 runs. But here, without Henry, it helped India cash in.

Rohit hit the 2nd ball he faced in the first over for a six and one got the feeling this could be his day. This was vintage Rohit, who played at his aggressive best, targeting the Kiwi pacers and unsettling them. India were 64/0 in the first 10 overs with Rohit on 49. Notably, Gill played the supporting role and took his



time. Rohit's blitz allowed the same.

In the 18th over, the 100-plus stand was completed before Gill perished for 31 runs from 50 balls. The 105-run stand was a spectacular effort from India's point of view. This helped India lay the platform and not have batters coming in to do the heavy lifting.

Notably, Rohit became the fourth captain in the ICC Champions Trophy finals to hit a 50-plus score. This is also the third stand of 100-plus for the opening wicket in the Champions Trophy finals, highlighting the impetus of the same.

GLENN PHILLIPS' SUPERHUMAN EFFORT BRINGS NZ BACK

Glenn Phillips is a three-dimensional player. He has been consistent with the bat in his hand and the fielding. Having already taken a brilliant catch off Kohli in the Group A contest, Phillips pulled off superhuman stuff this time to send Gill back.

In his sixth over, skipper Santer got Gill, whose shot looked destined for a four. But out of nowhere, Phillips pulled off a blinder. Gill, who was settling in nicely, looked to unleash a powerful drive through the covers. But Phillips intervened as he leaped to his right and caught the ball one-handed mid-air, leaving Gill stunned. Out of nowhere, New Zealand got a wicket and that changed the match's complexion.

Kohli came in and was out moments later in the 20th over which led to NZ dominating the period that followed. India, who were 108/2 after 20 overs, managed 14 runs in the next six overs. Rohit, who was on song prior to that, was forced to go in a shell. It's not his game to play singles and hang in there. This led to a premature big shot which cost him his wicket as India were reduced to 122/3. India's runs tally remained 14 runs off 7 overs now since the 20th. Credit to Phillips for bringing in life from NZ's point of view, which helped the side make this a stern contest; otherwise, Rohit and Gill would have taken them for more runs. This catch will be remembered for ages. ■

REASONS WHY HARDIK PANDYA IS THE MVP OF TEAM INDIA IN WHITE-BALL CRICKET

If one player has made it a habit to rise to the occasion, it's Hardik Pandya. Since his international debut in 2016, Hardik has carried a fearless, swashbuckling approach. However, beyond his flamboyance...





BY CT CONTRIBUTOR

Indian cricket has always been blessed with players who shine brightest under pressure – from the ice-cool MS Dhoni to the relentless chaser Virat Kohli. But a new name has forcefully entered this elite club of clutch performers in the past few years: Hardik Pandya.

With India's recent entry into the finals of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, just months after clinching the T20 World Cup 2024, Hardik's all-round brilliance has once again proved why he is the most valuable player (MVP) in India's white-ball setup.

HARDIK PANDYA – A CAREER DEFINED BY BIG MOMENTS

If one player has made it a habit to rise to the occasion, it's Hardik Pandya. Since his international debut in 2016, Hardik has carried a fearless, swashbuckling approach. However, beyond his flamboyance lies a rare ability to deliver in high-pressure games, particularly in ICC tournaments.

2017 CHAMPIONS TROPHY FINAL – AN EARLY GLIMPSE

Hardik first offered a glimpse of his big-match credentials during the 2017 Champions Trophy final against Pakistan. While the match is remembered mainly for India's crushing defeat, Pandya's heroic 76 off 43 balls stood out like a lone bright spot. Walking into a hopeless situation, Pandya counter-attacked with brutal clarity, nearly dragging India back into the game. Though his run-out ended the fight, the knock

cemented his reputation as someone who thrives when the heat is on.

2019 WORLD CUP SEMI-FINAL – A TEST OF GRIT

Fast forward to 2019, and Pandya's temperament was tested once again. On a treacherous pitch in the World Cup semi-final against New Zealand, Hardik's gritty 32 off 62 balls kept India in the hunt when top-order collapse had all but sealed their fate. It wasn't his most glamorous knock, but it showed his adaptability and willingness to do the dirty work – qualities that separate regular players from true match-winners.

2022 T20 WORLD CUP – THE KNOCKOUT IMPACT

If 2017 and 2019 hinted at his big-match temperament, the 2022 T20 World Cup confirmed it. In the semi-final against England at the Adelaide Oval, Pandya produced one of the most underappreciated fifties under pressure, smashing 63 off 33 balls, including a late flourish that took India to a respectable total. Though India lost the match, Pandya's fearless batting showed that he remains unfazed by occasion or opposition.

2024 T20 WORLD CUP – FROM PLAYER TO LEADER

The 2024 T20 World Cup highlighted Hardik 2.0 – not just a match-winner, but a leader. India played with three spinners throughout the tournament, a tactical shift that placed immense responsibility on Hardik as the team's second seamer. This gamble paid off spectacularly. Hardik finished among India's top 3



wicket-takers, demonstrating his evolution from a hit-the-deck bowler to someone who could deliver under any conditions. His most defining moment came in the final, bowling the last over against South Africa's David Miller, defending 15 runs. Pandya's nerve, precision yorkers, and clever use of pace variations sealed India's first T20 World Cup win since 2007.

PAKISTAN – HARDIK'S FAVORITE OPPONENT

Hardik seems to unlock an extra gear regarding India vs Pakistan clashes. Pandya's performances against arch-rivals Pakistan have become almost legendary in Asia Cups, bilateral tournaments, and ICC events.

2022 T20 WORLD CUP – His 3/30 and a vital 113-run stand with Kohli at Melbourne saw India pull off a dramatic win in front of 90,000 fans.

2017 CHAMPIONS TROPHY FINAL – That 76 off 43 was the first sign of his 'big-game player' mentality.

2023 ASIA CUP – Another crucial half-century in a tricky group stage game.

The sheer frequency of his match-winning moments against Pakistan makes him India's ultimate trump

card in these emotionally charged fixtures.

UNBEATEN IN ICC MATCHES AGAINST AUSTRALIA

Interestingly, Hardik has yet to lose an ICC match against Australia, which is another testament to his uncanny ability to bring his A-game against the toughest opponents. In the 2023 World Cup, 2024 T20 World Cup, and the recent 2025 Champions Trophy semi-final, Hardik has produced valuable contributions with both bat and ball, helping India dominate their old foes.

PANDYA – THE SEAM-BOWLING ALL-ROUNDER INDIA DESPERATELY NEEDED

For years, India struggled to find a genuine seam-bowling all-rounder who could consistently balance the side in white-ball cricket. Hardik has not just filled this void but redefined the role. Since the 2024 T20 World Cup, India's strategy of fielding four spinners has only worked because Hardik has delivered as the second seamer.

His ODI numbers also reflect this evolution. With 94 wickets in 114 T20Is and equally impressive ODI figures, he has become Rohit Sharma's go-to man whenever India needs a breakthrough or someone to break a dangerous partnership. What's remarkable is



how he has kept evolving – from an enforcer to a more tactical, thinking bowler capable of adapting to conditions and opposition.

THE LEADERSHIP FACTOR – HARDIK'S INFLUENCE BEYOND NUMBERS

Numbers tell only half the story with Pandya. The rest comes from his presence – his attitude, aggression, and belief. Teammates and coaches often highlight his unwavering self-confidence, a quality that has rubbed off on the younger generation. After captaining Gujarat Titans to an IPL title in their debut season, Hardik's leadership skills are no longer questioned.

Even under Rohit Sharma's captaincy, Pandya functions like a vice-captain in spirit, constantly involved in decision-making. This dual role – match-winner and tactical brain – makes him even more invaluable.

Hardik Pandya stands out as India's ultimate MVP in modern white-ball cricket. His rare ability to win matches with both bat and ball makes him irreplaceable in the current setup. Hardik's all-round brilliance gives India a balance no other player can offer, whether it's smashing quick runs under pressure, delivering breakthroughs with the ball, or handling crunch moments with remarkable composure. With

Bumrah battling injuries and Kohli's role evolving, Hardik's value has never been higher, making him the most indispensable player in India's white-ball plans heading into the 2025 Champions Trophy and beyond.

HARDIK PANDYA – FROM X-FACTOR TO MVP

Hardik Pandya's story is more than a collection of flashy knocks and clever spells. It's a tale of a player who thrives in chaos, loves pressure, and, most importantly, delivers when India need it most. A Hardik moment stands out in every ICC tournament since 2017 – a clutch knock, a vital spell, or a crucial over. As India aims for back-to-back ICC titles, Hardik Pandya's name is already in history. From a flamboyant youngster to a seasoned match-winner, Pandya has evolved into the MVP India always needed. And if history is any guide, expect him to produce yet another iconic moment when it matters most – in the finals of the 2025 Champions Trophy.

What do you think? Is Hardik Pandya already India's greatest white-ball all-rounder, or does he need one more magical performance to seal the legacy? Either way, in today's Indian cricket, you want Hardik Pandya in your corner when the pressure mounts. ■

3 HEROES AND 3 ZEROES OF INDIA VS NEW ZEALAND ICC CHAMPIONS TROPHY 2025 FINAL

Rohit showed he still has a lot of juice left in him, scoring a solid 76. If not for those wickets and NZ being exceptional, Rohit was likely to get a ton. However, he set the tone for the victory with his fiery fifty. He also surpassed 1000 ODI runs against the Kiwis...





BY CT CONTRIBUTOR

Team India, under the leadership of Rohit Sharma, won the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. On Sunday, India overcame New Zealand in the final at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, Dubai. It was a hard-fought win in the end, as India also made sure to end unbeaten from 5 matches in the tournament, defeating the Kiwis twice in the process. This was India's 3rd Champions Trophy win (one shared) as Rohit became the 2nd Indian skipper to win multiple white-ball ICC events across formats after MS Dhoni, who won three.

Once again, India's spin-heavy quartet made the difference, reducing the Kiwis to 251/7 in 50 overs. New Zealand did reasonably well toward the end and put up a decent total from their position. The likes of Daryl Mitchell and Michael Bracewell scored valuable fifties for the team as Rachin Ravindra impressed up front. For India, Varun Chakravarthy and Kuldeep Yadav claimed two scalps each. In response, India made a rampant start in pursuit of 252. Skipper Rohit and his opening partner Shubman Gill added 105 runs. However, the side lost three wickets for 17 runs, including captain Rohit for 76 and Virat Kohli for one. Shreyas Iyer, who was India's top scorer in the tournament, chipped in with a clutch 48. Axar Patel also made his presence felt with a knock of 29 to leave

49 runs to get from 51 balls.

Hardik Pandya (18) and KL Rahul (34*) did well towards the end as Ravindra Jadeja hit the winning runs with an over to spare. India were a step ahead in the contest thanks to their spinners once again.

Here, we look at three heroes and 3 zeroes as India defeated New Zealand.

HEROES:

ROHIT SHARMA: The veteran was smart firstly on the field as a captain. Just when NZ were off to a strong start and scoring freely, his timely decision to bring in Chakravarthy paid dividends as the spinner got Will Young. He then got Kuldeep Yadav in the 11th over who dismissed Ravindra with his first ball. Rohit handled his spinners well thereafter. And then, with the bat, Rohit showed he still has a lot of juice left in him, scoring a solid 76. If not for those wickets and NZ being exceptional, Rohit was likely to get a ton. However, he set the tone for the victory with his fiery fifty. He also surpassed 1000 ODI runs against the Kiwis during his stay. He smashed 7 fours and three sixes.

MICHAEL BRACEWELL: Despite ending on the losing side, NZ's Michael Bracewell was exceptional with both bat and ball. His heroics ensured a neat contest between the two sides blended with tense moments. Bracewell walked in when NZ were 165/5 in



the 38th over. He shared a 46-run stand with Mitchell and another 28 runs with Mitchell Santner. His exploits off Mohammed Shami and Hardik Pandya helped NZ get past 250. He scored an unbeaten 53 from 40 balls, hitting three fours and two sixes. And then, with the ball, Bracewell was magnificent. His 10 overs produced only 28 runs (1 maiden). He accounted for two wickets, which included Kohli.

KL RAHUL: The star Indian versatile batter received a lot of praise from his skipper during the post-match presentation. Rahul was calm and composed when he walked out. He came in when India were 183/4. India needed 69 runs to win from 68 balls, and Rahul ensured he was there until the end. He scored 34* from 33 balls, hitting a four and a six. He knew how to go about the

chase and make his presence felt at the crease. His persona helped someone like Pandya to play freely. Rahul looked sorted out there, and he could keep Rishabh Pant on the bench in ODIs for a long time, it seems.

ZEROES:

KANE WILLIAMSON: The in-form New Zealand batter walked in when his side lost Young in the 8th over. The stage was set for Williamson to bat long and see out the Indian spinners, given his pedigree. However, Williamson fell prey to Kuldeep in the 13th over. A fuller delivery in the middle saw the batter get forward to push the ball, but he couldn't keep it down, offering a simple catch back to the bowler. It was poor from Williamson, who got lucky



earlier when he tried to play a similar shot in Kuldeep's previous over, but the ball was wider off the bowler. Seeing his side lose two wickets from the other end, Williamson could have taken his time and not repeat a similar shot.

NATHAN SMITH: The player replaced Matt Henry in the New Zealand side with the latter suffering an injury during the semis. And unlike Henry, Smith was a disaster. He came on as the first change, and Rohit fed off him. Only two overs were handed to Smith in this match, and both came in the power play. Smith was spanked for 14 runs in the 8th over, with Rohit collecting two fours and a six. Earlier in the sixth over, Rohit spanked him for his 2nd six of the night. Smith was poor with his offerings and failed to fill any

sort of void left by Henry, who ended the tournament as the highest wicket-taker.

VIRAT KOHLI: The star Indian batter was once again out to spin at a crucial moment in the contest. India had just lost Gill, and Kohli perished shortly thereafter for a score of 1. It was a tossed-up delivery from Bracewell that drifted back into the right-handed batter, and Kohli, who closed the face of the bat while trying to tuck the ball, got beaten on the inside edge and was trapped LBW. Kohli has often been guilty of playing forward to deliveries, which perhaps, like Shreyas, can be played on the back foot. Once again, it was spin that did the trick. Across 4 innings against spin in the 2025 CT, Kohli was out three times. He averaged 38 and struck at 73.54. ■

CHAMPIONS TROPHY 2025: SANTNER TO LEAD TEAM OF THE TOURNAMENT, VIRAT, HARDIK MAKE THE CUT

Rachin Ravindra once again proved to be New Zealand's ICC tournament hero. Crowned the Golden Bat winner, Ravindra scored 263 runs in just four matches. His two centuries demonstrated his ability to dominate quality bowling attacks...





BY CT CONTRIBUTOR

The ICC Champions Trophy 2025 witnessed intense cricketing action, with numerous players delivering impactful performances that left fans in awe. Throughout the tournament, certain individuals emerged as game-changers with their remarkable displays of skill, resilience, and composure under pressure. From clutch knocks to match-winning spells, these standout contributions played a pivotal role in shaping the tournament's narrative. As India lifted the trophy after a thrilling final against New Zealand, several key performers across teams etched their names into the history books. Here's the ultimate 'Team of the Tournament' based on standout performances, crucial contributions, and moments of brilliance that defined the 2025 Champions Trophy.

1. BEN DUCKETT (ENGLAND)

Ben Duckett was England's standout performer, finishing third in the golden bat race despite his team crashing out before the semi-finals. Ben Duckett was England's standout performer, finishing third in the golden bat race despite his team crashing out before the semi-finals. Duckett scored 227 runs in just three matches at an impressive average of 75. His most memorable knock came against Australia, where he scored a magnificent 165. Despite England's

struggles, Duckett's consistency and ability to counter-attack placed him among the elite performers of the tournament.

2. RACHIN RAVINDRA (NEW ZEALAND)

Rachin Ravindra once again proved to be New Zealand's ICC tournament hero. Crowned the Golden Bat winner, Ravindra scored 263 runs in just four matches. His two centuries demonstrated his ability to dominate quality bowling attacks. Known as 'Mr. ICC' for his remarkable performances in big tournaments, Ravindra's 263 runs, without a single half-century, underline his ability to convert starts into big scores.

3. VIRAT KOHLI (INDIA)

Virat Kohli reaffirmed his status as the backbone of India's top order. Amassing 218 runs in five innings, Kohli delivered in high-pressure encounters. His defining performances came in India's marquee fixtures — a century against Pakistan and a crucial 50 against Australia in the semi-final. Kohli's experience and calmness under pressure played a pivotal role in India's title triumph.

4. SHREYAS IYER (INDIA)

Shreyas Iyer emerged as India's most consistent batter, accumulating 243 runs in five innings at an average of 48. With two half-centuries to his name, Iyer played a crucial role in stabilizing India's middle order. His ability to rotate strike and find boundaries



ensured momentum in critical phases, making him the second-highest run-getter in the tournament.

5. KL RAHUL (INDIA – WICKETKEEPER)

KL Rahul's contributions may not have been reflected in big scores, but his impact was undeniable. In five innings, Rahul scored 140 runs and was unbeaten on three occasions, averaging an astonishing 140. His 34* in the final proved vital as India chased down New Zealand's total. Rahul's presence behind the stumps added further value to his role in the team.

6. AZMATULLAH OMARZAI (AFGHANISTAN)

The 2024 ICC ODI Player of the Year carried his form into the Champions Trophy. Omarzai's all-round brilliance saw him claim seven wickets in three matches, including a stunning five-wicket haul. With the bat, he contributed 127 runs, including a vital 67 against Australia. Although Afghanistan didn't reach the semi-finals, Omarzai's performances were crucial to their campaign.

7. HARDIK PANDYA (INDIA)

Hardik Pandya again showed why he's India's go-to man in crucial situations. Across five matches, Pandya picked up four wickets and scored 99 runs, including a match-winning 59* against New Zealand in a tense group-stage encounter. His ability to deliver in crunch moments makes him an invaluable asset in ICC events.

8. MICHAEL BRACEWELL (NEW ZEALAND)

Michael Bracewell's contributions were pivotal, particularly in the final against India. He picked up two crucial wickets, including that of Virat Kohli and Axar Patel. Bracewell scored 83 runs in the tournament with the bat, including a vital 53 in the final. His all-round heroics kept New Zealand in contention and underlined his impact in crucial moments.

9. MITCHELL SANTNER (NEW ZEALAND – CAPTAIN)

Leading New Zealand to the final in his first major ICC tournament as captain, Mitchell Santner displayed remarkable leadership. Although he didn't contribute much with the bat (38 runs), his bowling proved



invaluable. Santner picked up nine wickets at an economy rate below five, controlling the middle overs and expertly guiding New Zealand's bowling attack.

10. VARUN CHAKRAVARTHY (INDIA)

India's wildcard entry, Varun Chakravarthy, turned the tide for the Men in Blue. His impactful performances forced India to rely on a four-spinner strategy, which proved successful. Varun picked up nine wickets in just three matches, including a sensational five-wicket haul in the group stage. His ability to deceive batters with his variations played a key role in India's bowling dominance./im

11. MATT HENRY (NEW ZEALAND)

After finishing as the tournament's highest wicket-taker, Matt Henry won the Golden Ball award. Despite missing the final due to a shoulder injury, Henry picked up 10 wickets in four matches, including a memorable five-wicket haul against India in the group stage. His ability to strike early and maintain pressure with disciplined lines ensured his position as the tournament's top bowler.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

AXAR PATEL (INDIA)

Axar Patel provided crucial stability with both bat and ball. Batting at number five, he scored 119 runs in five matches, including a vital 29 in the final after a mini-collapse. Additionally, he claimed five wickets, contributing significantly to India's success.

TOM LATHAM (NEW ZEALAND)

Tom Latham showcased his class with the bat, scoring 205 runs in five matches. His performances included one century and one half-century, proving vital for New Zealand's journey to the final.

The ICC Champions Trophy 2025 showcased exceptional talent, grit, and skill. This 'Team of the Tournament' represents players who delivered when it mattered most. From Ravindra's centuries to Henry's devastating spells, each member played a defining role in their team's journey. As India celebrated their Champions Trophy triumph, these standout performers left a lasting mark on cricket's grand stage. ■

FLOP XI OF ICC CHAMPIONS TROPHY 2025

Phil Salt entered the tournament as England's explosive opening batter, but his aggressive approach backfired. Across three innings, Salt managed to score just 30 runs in 3 innings, failing to provide his side by contributing with the fiery starts...



BY CT CONTRIBUTOR

The ICC Champions Trophy 2025 delivered thrilling moments, outstanding performances, and unforgettable victories. However, while some players rose to the occasion, others failed to make an impact despite high expectations. From experienced campaigners to rising stars, several cricketers endured a tough time in this edition of the tournament. Inconsistent performances, lack of form, and missed opportunities plagued their campaigns, leaving their teams in difficult positions. As the saying goes, form is temporary, and even the best players can experience a rough patch on the big stage.

While cricket often celebrates heroes, reflecting on those who couldn't deliver when it mattered most is equally important. This 'Flop XI' highlights players who were unable to meet expectations during the Champions Trophy, shedding light on the tough realities of top-level cricket and the unpredictable nature of major tournaments. Here's a closer look at the players who endured a forgettable campaign.

1. PHIL SALT (ENGLAND – WICKETKEEPER)

Phil Salt entered the tournament as England's explosive opening batter, but his aggressive approach backfired. Across three innings, Salt managed to score just 30 runs in 3 innings, failing to provide his side

with the fiery starts they needed. His inability to adapt to challenging conditions proved costly for England, who faced an early exit.

2. RAHMANULLAH GURBAZ (AFGHANISTAN – WICKETKEEPER)

Afghanistan's attacking wicketkeeper-batter, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, endured a nightmare tournament. With just 16 runs in 3 innings, Gurbaz struggled against both pace and spin. His aggressive mindset resulted in poor shot selections, leaving Afghanistan vulnerable at the top of the order.

3. HARRY BROOK (ENGLAND)

England had high hopes for Harry Brook, touted as their next big sensation. Unfortunately, Brook managed a mere 47 runs in 3 matches, failing to anchor the middle order or accelerate when required. His poor shot selection and lack of adaptability were major letdowns for the defending champions.

4. MUSHFIQUR RAHIM (BANGLADESH)

The experienced veteran, Mushfiqur Rahim, had a disastrous outing in the Champions Trophy. He managed just 2 runs in 2 innings, unable to guide Bangladesh through crucial middle-over phases. His poor form played a significant role in Bangladesh's early exit.

5. JOS BUTTLER (ENGLAND – CAPTAIN &





WICKETKEEPER)

Jos Buttler's struggles with both form and leadership haunted England. The England skipper scored just 82 runs in 3 matches despite batting at the crucial No. 5 position. His failure to stabilize the innings and provide impactful contributions ultimately led him to step down as England's white-ball captain following their disappointing campaign.

6. TAYYAB TAHIR (PAKISTAN)

Pakistan entered the tournament hoping Tayyab Tahir could provide aggressive middle-order firepower. However, Tahir managed only 5 runs in 2 innings, failing to leave any mark with the bat. His inability to accelerate or anchor the innings proved to be a significant setback for Pakistan.

7. GLENN MAXWELL (AUSTRALIA)

The explosive 'Big Show' Glenn Maxwell flattered to deceive in this edition of the Champions Trophy. Despite a promising 32 in the opening match*, Maxwell followed it up with low scores, ending the tournament with just 39 runs in 3 innings. His inability to build on his start cost Australia dearly in the crucial stages. As an all rounder he picked up 2 wickets in 3

matches failing yet again.

8. RASHID KHAN (AFGHANISTAN)

Widely regarded as one of the best white-ball bowlers, Rashid Khan endured a rare forgettable tournament. Across three matches, Rashid bowled only twice due to a rain-affected fixture and picked up just 1 wicket at an economy rate of 6.6. With the bat, he contributed only 38 runs in 3 innings, failing to provide impactful lower-order runs. Adding to his woes, Rashid dropped a crucial catch against Australia, further compounding his disappointing campaign.

9. HARIS RAUF (PAKISTAN)

Known for his pace and aggression, Haris Rauf had a below-par tournament. In 2 matches, Rauf managed just 2 wickets, failing to build pressure or deliver impactful spells. His inconsistency and lack of rhythm prevented Pakistan from containing opposition batters. All his 2 wickets came in a single match against New Zealand where he conceded 83 runs off his 10 overs.

10. NOOR AHMAD (AFGHANISTAN)

The young spin sensation Noor Ahmad was expected to shine in the middle overs for Afghanistan, but he



struggled to make an impression. Across 3 matches, Noor claimed just 1 wicket, proving ineffective at controlling the scoring rate or picking crucial breakthroughs. His place is in jeopardy as young sensational spinners are knocking on the doors.

11. MARK WOOD (ENGLAND)

The express pace of Mark Wood failed to trouble batters in this year's Champions Trophy. Wood played 2 matches, claiming just 1 wicket. His inability to extract pace and bounce effectively hurt England's chances, particularly in crunch moments. Time in running out for woody.

OTHER MENTIONS

Hasmatullah Shahidi (Afghanistan Captain): Despite being an experienced campaigner, Shahidi had a quiet tournament, scoring 60 runs in 3 innings. While his composure at the crease was visible, he couldn't deliver impactful performances when Afghanistan needed them most.

Shaheen Shah Afridi: Known for his fiery pace and wicket-taking ability, Afridi endured a forgettable campaign, claiming just 2 wickets in 2 matches at an

economy of over 7. His inability to strike early and contain runs proved costly for his team.

Jamie Overton: While Overton contributed 43 runs with the bat across 2 matches, his primary role as a bowler fell short of expectations, managing just 1 wicket. Despite glimpses of potential, his overall performance left much to be desired.

The ICC Champions Trophy 2025 witnessed several established stars struggling to meet expectations, contributing to their teams' disappointing campaigns. Notably, wicketkeepers had a particularly tough time in this edition. Phil Salt, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Mushfiquar Rahim and Jos Buttler — all expected to provide impactful performances — ended up in the Flop XI. Their inability to score runs or control the game from behind the stumps proved detrimental to their respective sides.

While cricket is unpredictable, the Champions Trophy reminded us that even the biggest names can falter under pressure. For these players, the upcoming season presents a chance to bounce back stronger and reclaim their status as match-winners on the global stage. ■

5 PAKISTANI PLAYERS WHO DON'T DESERVE TO BE IN THE ODI SQUAD

Once hailed as Pakistan's most reliable batsman, Babar Azam has witnessed a concerning decline in both form and intent. After stepping down from captaincy, Babar seems to have lost his hunger to dominate opposition bowlers...

BY CT CONTRIBUTOR

Pakistan's ODI squad has been under fire following their dismal performances in the ongoing international circuit. The team was virtually eliminated from the ICC Champions Trophy after suffering consecutive defeats against New Zealand and India. Their historical record against India in ICC events now stands at a staggering 4 wins in 22 matches, highlighting their continued struggles on the big stage. The current squad selection has raised numerous questions, with many players failing to deliver when it matters the most. Several players have been given ample opportunities but have consistently underperformed, either due to lack of form, fitness issues, or poor attitude. Here, we analyze five Pakistani cricketers who do not deserve to be in the current ODI squad based on their recent performances and overall contribution to the team.

1) BABAR AZAM – THE FALLEN STAR

Once hailed as Pakistan's most reliable batsman, Babar Azam has witnessed a concerning decline in both form and intent. After stepping down from captaincy, Babar seems to have lost his hunger to dominate opposition bowlers. His fitness has also become a concern, as he has visibly put on weight, affecting his agility and stroke-making ability. In 2025, Babar has played five ODIs and managed to score only 149 runs. What's even more alarming is that 64 of those runs came in a single innings, which means he has contributed just 85 runs in the other four matches combined. This lack of consistency and impact raises serious doubts about his place in the squad. A player of his stature and experience should be leading from the front, but instead, he has become a liability in the middle order.

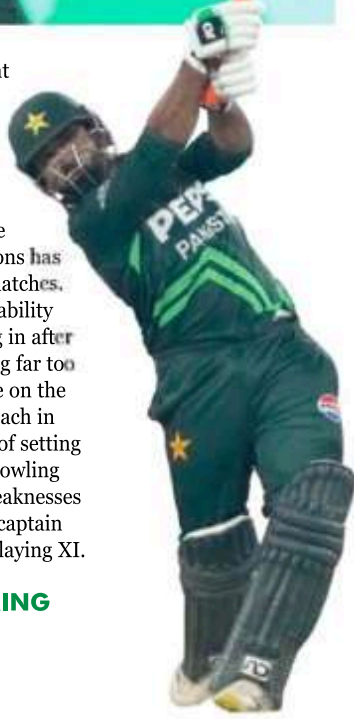
2) MOHAMMAD RIZWAN – A WEAK LEADER AND UNDERPERFORMER

Mohammad Rizwan's inclusion in the ODI squad is



highly questionable, especially given his recent performances and tactical shortcomings. He was handed the responsibility of leading the team after Babar's resignation, but his captaincy has been far from convincing. Rizwan has struggled to make impactful decisions, especially in crucial moments of the game. His inability to handle pressure situations has been evident in the ICC Champions Trophy matches. As a batsman, Rizwan has failed to provide stability when the team needed him the most. Walking in after two early wickets, he has been guilty of playing far too many dot balls, ultimately increasing pressure on the lower middle order. Moreover, his slow approach in the middle overs has hurt Pakistan's chances of setting up competitive totals. His failure to manage bowling changes effectively has further exposed his weaknesses as a leader. Rizwan, at best, is a very average captain and has done little to justify his place in the playing XI.

3) TAYYAB TAHIR – THE UNINSPIRING



MIDDLE-ORDER BATTER

Tayyab Tahir was brought into the squad as part of Pakistan's "new regime," but he has failed to live up to expectations. At 31 years old, he was expected to bring stability and experience to the middle order, but his performances have been nothing short of disappointing. In eight ODIs, Tayyab has managed only 134 runs without a single fifty or hundred. This is an alarming statistic for a player who was meant to reinforce the batting lineup. His lack of adaptability and inability to handle pressure situations make him an undeserving candidate for the ODI squad. Pakistan has plenty of young, promising batters waiting for an opportunity, and it is high time the selectors move on from underperforming players like Tayyab Tahir.

4) HARIS RAUF – THE RUN-LEAKING SPECIALIST

Haris Rauf was once regarded as Pakistan's go-to strike bowler in white-ball cricket, but his recent performances have painted a different picture. He has



been consistently leaking runs without picking up crucial wickets, making him a major liability in the bowling attack. In 2024, Rauf played eight ODIs and picked up 13 wickets. However, a closer look at his stats reveals that five of those wickets came in a single match, meaning he was largely ineffective in the other games. In 2025, his performances have worsened—he has played three ODIs and taken only three wickets while conceding runs at an alarming economy of 7.00. A fast bowler's primary role is to either take wickets or contain the flow of runs, and Haris has failed to do both. With younger, more disciplined bowlers available, it is difficult to justify his continued presence in the squad.

5) SHAHEEN SHAH AFRIDI – THE

INCONSISTENT PERFORMER

Shaheen Shah Afridi's case is different from the rest. Statistically, he has performed decently, but his attitude and internal conflicts have severely impacted team morale. Reports suggest that he is not on great terms with Babar Azam, and with Rizwan acting as a middle ground, this ongoing internal rift has undoubtedly affected Pakistan's overall performance. Afridi's inconsistency is another pressing concern. While he has produced moments of brilliance, his inability to maintain rhythm across tournaments has hurt the team. A player of his caliber should be spearheading the bowling attack with authority, but instead, his unpredictable form makes him a questionable choice.



THE BIGGER PICTURE: PAKISTAN'S NEED FOR A REVAMP

Pakistan's ODI squad needs an urgent revamp if they wish to compete at the highest level. The players mentioned above have been given enough opportunities but have failed to make an impact. The selection committee needs to adopt a fresh approach and introduce young, hungry cricketers who can bring energy and intent to the team. Pakistan has a history of unearthing raw talent, and the current domestic circuit is filled with potential stars who are waiting for their chance. Instead of persisting with underperforming players, the management must take bold calls and invest in the future. The ICC Champions Trophy debacle should serve as a wake-up call for Pakistan cricket.

CONCLUSION

Pakistan's ODI struggles are not just about individual failures but also about poor team dynamics, weak leadership, and selection blunders. The five players mentioned above have contributed significantly to the team's downfall, either through their poor form, questionable fitness, or ineffective leadership. Moving forward, Pakistan must make tough decisions and focus on rebuilding a squad that can compete against the best in the world. With the 2027 Cricket World Cup on the horizon, Pakistan needs a team that is fit, mentally strong, and tactically sound. The sooner they address these issues, the better their chances of returning to their former glory. Until then, it remains to be seen whether the selectors will finally acknowledge these concerns and make the necessary changes. ■

5 ENGLAND PLAYERS WHO SHOULD BE DROPPED FROM THE ODI TEAM AFTER CHAMPIONS TROPHY 2025 DISASTER

Liam Livingstone's inclusion in the England ODI team was initially seen as a masterstroke. A powerful striker of the ball and a useful spinner, Livingstone was expected to provide balance at No.6 while also chipping in with crucial overs in the middle phase...

BY CT CONTRIBUTOR

England's disastrous campaign in the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy has left fans, experts, and the England Cricket Board (ECB) questioning the future of their One-Day International (ODI) setup. The champions from the 2019 World Cup failed even to reach the semifinals, crashing out after humiliating losses to Afghanistan and Australia. What made matters worse was their inability to defend 350+

totals and their repeated collapses while chasing even moderate targets like 320.

In the aftermath, Jos Buttler stepped down from the captaincy, taking responsibility for the team's poor run. However, the problems run much deeper than just leadership. Several players have underperformed for a prolonged period, and it's clear that a revamp is required if England wants to rebuild ahead of the 2027 World Cup. Here are 5 players who should be dropped from the England ODI team immediately:



1) LIAM LIVINGSTONE – THE ALL-ROUNDER WHO DOES NEITHER

Liam Livingstone's inclusion in the England ODI team was initially seen as a masterstroke. A powerful striker of the ball and a useful spinner, Livingstone was expected to provide balance at No.6 while also chipping in with crucial overs in the middle phase of the innings. Unfortunately, his performances have consistently fallen short of expectations.

Livingstone's Recent Form

Livingstone endured a forgettable tour of India in the lead-up to the Champions Trophy, during which he played all 7 white-ball games (3 ODIs & 4 T20Is) without registering a single match-winning contribution. His bowling was inconsistent, his batting lacked maturity, and his shot selection often frustrated fans. In the Champions Trophy, Livingstone once again failed to leave his mark, both with the bat and the ball.

Liam Livingstone's ODI Numbers

MATCHES	RUNS	WICKETS	50's	100's
39	932	25	4	1

These numbers might look reasonable on paper, but they mask his real problem — lack of impact. Most of his runs and wickets have come in dead rubbers or inconsequential situations. He blocks the spot for genuine all-rounders like Sam Curran, who could offer more reliability. England must accept that Livingstone's versatility is a myth at this point, and it's time to move on.



2) JAMIE OVERTON – ALL HYPE, NO PERFORMANCE

Jamie Overton's rise into the England setup was mainly based on his performances in The Hundred and domestic cricket, where he displayed big-hitting prowess and decent pace with the ball. However, the international stage has been a completely different story for him.

Overton's ODI Struggles

Since his debut, Overton has failed to contribute meaningfully in either department. With the bat, he has struggled to adapt to ODI pacing, often throwing his wicket away while trying to play T20-style slogs. He's been expensive and toothless with the ball, failing to provide the breakthroughs England expected from him.

A Candidate for County Rebuilding

30 Overton still has time to refine his game, but that should happen away from the spotlight of international cricket. A solid stint in county cricket, where he focuses on his line, length, and developing composure with the bat, could help him return as a much-improved cricketer. However, he does not belong in England's ODI plans for now.

Jamie Overton's ODI Numbers

MATCHES	RUNS	WICKETS
5	81	4



3) MARK WOOD – THE VETERAN SPEEDSTER WHO’S PAST HIS PRIME

Mark Wood has been a loyal servant to English cricket, known for his searing pace and ability to hurry batters. However, age and injuries have taken their toll. At 35, Wood’s body no longer supports the demands of 50-over cricket. His pace remains intact, but his accuracy and consistency have dipped alarmingly.

Champions Trophy Disaster

In the 2025 Champions Trophy, Wood leaked runs at an economy of over 7.5, making him a liability in crucial phases. England’s bowling struggles, particularly at the death, were amplified by Wood’s inability to hit yorkers or keep batters guessing.

Time for England to Back Jofra Archer

Wood’s career stats reflect the fact that he was never the most prolific wicket-taker. With younger, fitter, and more skilful pacers like Jofra Archer and Brydon Carse waiting in the wings, it’s time for England to bid farewell to Wood in ODIs. He could still have a role in Tests, but his time in white-ball cricket is done.

Mark Wood ODI Numbers

MATCHES	WICKETS
70	80



4) PHIL SALT – A T20 SPECIALIST MISCAST IN ODIs

Phil Salt is a destructive top-order batter, but his game is built for the high-risk, high-reward nature of T20s. Salt’s shot selection often exposes his technical limitations in ODIs, where building an innings and pacing yourself is key.

Struggles in Recent Series

Salt managed scores of 10, 8, and 12 in the Champions Trophy, showing no real intent to adapt his game to the format’s demands. The India tour before the tournament wasn’t much better, where his inability to rotate strike and build partnerships cost England dearly.

England Need Stability at the Top

Salt’s 33 ODIs have yielded 988 runs, which isn’t terrible, but his inconsistency makes him a liability. England would be better off with someone like Ben Duckett, who can combine aggression with the ability to bat deep. With the ODI World Cup two years away, England cannot afford to keep backing a player who doesn’t fit the format.

Phil Salt’s ODI Numbers

MATCHES	RUNS	50’s	100’S
33	988	5	1



5) HARRY BROOK – TIME TO BURST THE HYPE BUBBLE

Harry Brook's talent is undeniable. He is technically sound, naturally aggressive, and capable of destroying attacks when in form. However, the ODI format has exposed his weakness against spin, impatience against disciplined bowling, and tendency to throw away starts.

Champions Trophy and Beyond

Brook's scores of 25, 25, and 19 in the Champions Trophy were a microcosm of his ODI career so far — promising starts followed by brain fades. In 26 ODIs, Brook has managed 816 runs, which is respectable but nowhere near what a player of his talent should be achieving.

England Needs Role-Specific Players

Brook thrived in T20s, but ODIs demand batters who can shift gears intelligently, anchor when needed, and accelerate at death. Players like Joe Clarke or even a return for Dawid Malan could make more sense at No.4. Brook can work on his game and return in the future, but England need results, not potential.

Harry Brook's ODI Numbers

MATCHES	RUNS	50's	100's
26	816	5	1

CONCLUSION – THE TIME FOR SENTIMENT IS OVER

England's golden generation, which peaked between 2019 and 2022, is now declining. The failure to adapt to changing conditions, particularly the rise of Asian teams like Afghanistan, has been exposed. If England wants to avoid another humiliating exit in the 2027 World Cup, they must make tough decisions now.

Dropping underperforming players like Livingstone, Overton, Wood, Salt, and Brook is

not just about form — it's about building a balanced squad that can play modern ODI cricket. England needs bowlers who can defend totals under pressure, batters who can build innings intelligently, and all-rounders who offer genuine contributions in both departments.

The Champions Trophy failure should be the wake-up call England needed. The future belongs to those who are hungry, fit, and adaptable — and it's time England selects accordingly.

TOP STORIES



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“I listen to everything people say about me. Be careful. I am watching you”

- Pep Guardiola reacts to Fabio Capello's accusation that he ruined the game in Italy



“

“He felt good and people in Jamaica could see him. It was a great night for all”

- Inter Miami coach Javier Mascherano on Lionel Messi's performance against Cavalier SC

TIME OFF FOR WIMBLEDON CHAMPION

Marketa Vondrousova, the 2023 Wimbledon champion, will take a few months off the tennis tour because of continuing problems with her surgically repaired left shoulder. “Patience and time are my priorities right now, but I believe it will all be worth it,” Vondrousova posted. “So hopefully back on the court soon.” The 25-year-old left-hander from the Czech Republic has played only eight matches so far in 2025, going 4-4, including a second-round loss to eventual champion Mirra Andreeva at Dubai last month in Vondrousova's most recent event. She hasn't entered a Grand Slam tournament since a first-round loss at Wimbledon in July, sitting out the U.S. Open last September and the Australian Open this January. She also missed last year's Paris Olympics shortly before having shoulder surgery in August.



AFRICAN SOCCER LEADER RE-ELECTED

African soccer leader Patrice Motsepe was re-elected and urged working with private financiers to help federations build national stadiums in countries where government budgets are tight. The 54 member federations of the Confederation of African Football — 12 of whom currently cannot host national-team games in international competitions — elected Motsepe by acclaim unopposed to have a second four-year term. “I was in Rwanda recently for a new stadium, and I was in Kenya, in Uganda, in Tanzania,” Motsepe said at a post-election news conference in Cairo. “New stadiums are being built because governments are beginning to recognize that football is an important part of the development and growth of a country.”



PAID MATERNITY LEAVE

Pregnant players on the women's tennis tour now can receive 12 months of paid maternity leave, and those who become parents via partner pregnancy, surrogacy or adoption can get two months off with pay, under a program sponsored by the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia and announced Thursday by the WTA. "Independent contractors and self-employed individuals don't typically have these kinds of maternity benefits provided and available to them. They have to go out and sort of figure out those benefits for themselves," WTA CEO Portia Archer said. "This is really sort of novel and groundbreaking." More than 300 players are eligible for the fund, which is retroactive to Jan. 1. The WTA would not disclose how much money is involved.

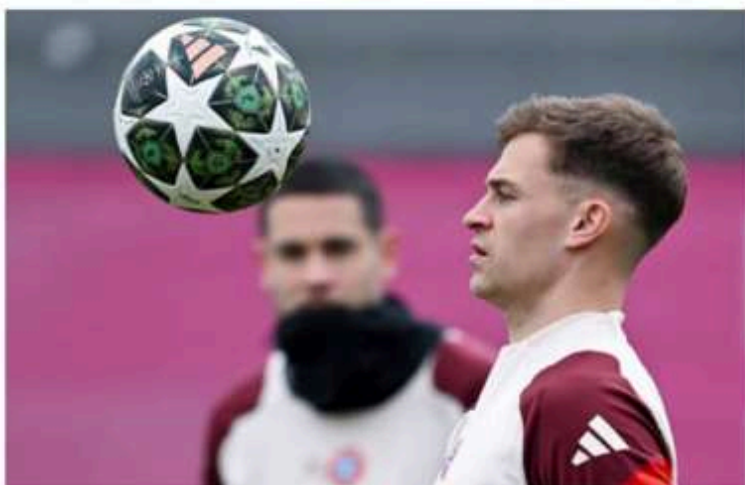


RONALDO ENDS BID

Brazil great Ronaldo Nazário has ended his bid for the presidency of his country's soccer confederation. The two-time World Cup winner turned businessman said Wednesday he lacked support among local soccer executives to challenge incumbent Ednaldo Rodrigues for the role of leading the Brazil Football Confederation. The 48-year-old Ronaldo had announced in December he would challenge Rodrigues, whose management has been under fire among fans and former players, though Rodrigues still enjoys high approval among soccer executives. The vote is expected to take place sometime between March and the same month next year, when Rodrigues' term ends. Ronaldo needed the support of at least four state federations to be allowed to run, but the former Inter Milan and Real Madrid star failed to do so.

KIMMICH COMMITS HIS FUTURE TO BAYERN MUNICH

Bayern Munich midfielder Joshua Kimmich signed a new four-year contract with the club after long-running talks. The Germany captain has been with Bayern since 2015, winning eight Bundesliga titles and the Champions League in 2020. "His hunger remains strong and that was clear to see again in the Champions League round of 16," chief executive Jan-Christian Dreesen said in a statement. "His determination and commitment embody what FC Bayern stands for. He's going to build a bridge between our current generation and a new era." The extension followed reports last month in Germany that Bayern withdrew an earlier contract offer to Kimmich as talks dragged on.



LEWIS HAMILTON STARTS A NEW CHAPTER WITH FERRARI

Hamilton's last championship was in 2020 and he was enroute to a record-breaking eighth title in the 2021 season finale until a controversial finish gave the title to Max Verstappen, who has since gone on to win four straight titles with Red Bull...

BY STAFF WRITER

Lewis Hamilton says he is "exactly where I'm supposed to be" after an emotional first day on track in Ferrari's new car. After the previous night's glitzy Formula 1 season launch in London, Hamilton got behind the wheel of the new Ferrari SF-25 for the first time at the team's Fiorano test track. Thousands of fans — most clad in Ferrari red — had gathered outside the fences surrounding the track to get a glimpse of their new hero.

Some even cut down a tree for a better view. Asked to pick a word to describe the day's sensations, Hamilton struggled initially but he insisted he wanted to do





better than the suggestion of “very good,” before settling on “emotional.” “Of course I’ve seen from the outside Ferrari over the years, the drivers over the years and how they’ve been received by their fans, ‘the tifosi,’” Hamilton said.

“But I think when you’re in it, it’s something even more special than you can imagine. You can’t know that until you get in there and experience it. And that’s been really beautiful to see.” The 40-year-old Hamilton shocked the motorsports world last year when he announced he was leaving Mercedes to join Ferrari. The British driver had been at Mercedes for 11 years and won six of his seven titles with the Silver Arrows.

“We know we have a huge amount of work to do, I know that I have a huge amount of work to do. I’m still acclimatizing I’ve only been here just over a month,” Hamilton said. “So I’m still acclimatizing to a completely new car, completely new way of working.

“But everyone has bent over backwards in this team to make me feel welcome. And I really feel at home. I know I’m exactly where I’m supposed to be. It feels natural. It feels right.” Hamilton will line up alongside Charles Leclerc, who has been at Ferrari since 2019. The 27-year-old Leclerc said it was already “the best team mentality” he has felt in his time at the Italian Scuderia.

“I worked with two world championship winning teams before,” Hamilton said. “I know what a winning team looks and feels like.

“The passion here is like nothing you’ve ever seen.

They’ve got absolutely every ingredient they need to win a world championship. And it’s just about putting all the pieces together.” However, Ferrari has not won a drivers’ title since Kimi Raikkonen in 2007.

Leclerc finished runner-up in 2022 and was third last year after ending the season with three podiums in the last four races as Ferrari began to show signs of being able to contend with Red Bull. Hamilton knows that expectations of him are sky high.

“This step is huge, it couldn’t be any bigger,” he said. You don’t want to let people down, you want to be able to deliver on your word. So how I decided to come into this year, my resolution, my mentality is that I need to elevate in absolutely every area on my side.

“It’s not just this who I am and just got to gel in, I’ve got to elevate in every single thing; my fitness, my time management, how I engage with my engineers, how much time I spend in the factory, all these different things. And I’ve definitely done that and I’m doing that. And I’ll continue to do that in this strive for perfection and to achieve the success that I’m aiming to achieve.”

Hamilton’s last championship was in 2020 and he was enroute to a record-breaking eighth title in the 2021 season finale until a controversial finish gave the title to Max Verstappen, who has since gone on to win four straight titles with Red Bull. If Hamilton does win that elusive eighth championship this season, he will become the third-oldest F1 champion. “If I was fortunate enough to win another title, which is obviously what we’re setting out to do, I don’t see myself stopping,” Hamilton said. ■

JADEN AGASSI, SON OF TENNIS LEGENDS ANDRE AGASSI AND STEFFI GRAF, WORKS TO MAKE MARK IN BASEBALL

The 23-year-old Agassi is a pitcher for Team Germany. The right-hander grew up in Las Vegas with his famous American dad and German mother before playing college baseball at USC. He holds dual citizenship and speaks a little German...





BY STAFF WRITER

It's not the least bit surprising that Jaden Agassi — son of tennis legends Andre Agassi and Steffi Graf — had a racket in his hand from the time he could walk. The little boy loved to run. He loved to hit the ball. The problem was accuracy wasn't his thing. "It was hard for me to keep the ball in the lines," Agassi said, laughing. "I just wanted to hit it as far as I could." So his parents signed him up for baseball. About 20 years later, he's trying to make his own mark in the sports world.

The 23-year-old Agassi is a pitcher for Team Germany. The right-hander grew up in Las Vegas with his famous American dad and German mother before playing college baseball at USC. He holds dual citizenship and speaks a little German. The popularity of baseball has grown in Germany over the past few decades, but manager Jendrick Speer was still searching for a few additions to the roster for the WBC qualifiers when he stumbled across Agassi on social media and realized his connections to the country.

"I found him because he's a good baseball player," Speer said. "With all the technology out there, we found him while researching and discovered that he had played in college and had citizenship. It worked out great and he's a great guy." Growing up in the Las Vegas area, Agassi was right in the middle of a baseball hotbed. The metro has produced recent MLB standouts like Bryce Harper, Kris Bryant, Bryson Stott, Paul Sewald, Joey Gallo and Tyler Anderson. Agassi said his parents never pushed him into tennis, baseball or any other sport because they didn't want to repeat their childhood and teenage years, which were totally consumed by tennis. Instead, he had a relatively normal upbringing and naturally gravitated toward the baseball diamond.

The lanky 6-foot-3 Agassi has had his share of setbacks during his baseball career. He needed Tommy John elbow surgery after his first game in 2019, which caused him to miss his junior season in high school. Then in 2020, his team played just a handful of games before COVID-19 shut down sports for the year. "It almost worked as a blessing in disguise," Agassi said. "I got almost two years to rehab my Tommy John, came back strong and then started my college career at USC."

His three seasons with the Trojans were a little up-and-down. He had a solid year as a sophomore with a 3-2 record and a 4.34 ERA, but after a coaching change, he regressed as a junior with a 9.70 ERA. He found his footing again in MLB's draft league last summer with a 2.96 ERA and 28 strikeouts over 27 1/3 innings. Now he's hoping to latch on to an MLB organization once the WBC qualifiers are over. His stint with Team Germany — which will likely include a bullpen role — is another chance for him to showcase his mid-90s fastball.

"It felt good to find some things that work for me," Agassi said. "Stick on a plan and get 1% better every day." Agassi doesn't mind that people often ask about his parents or why he doesn't play tennis. His mom won 22 Grand Slam titles while his dad won eight Grand Slams and one of the younger Agassi's first childhood memories is hugging his dad on the court after he got a big win late in his career.

While neither parent may be a baseball expert, he said they're both supportive of his baseball career and will be in the crowd this week as he pitches for mom's home country with Team Deutschland across his chest. "As a kid, you're kind of oblivious to the world," Agassi said. "It felt completely normal to me. I got a lot of knowledge and lessons learned from them. Picked up a lot of things and it's been a blessing." ■

OLYMPIC CHAMPION LYDIA KO WINS SINGAPORE LPGA

Ko added back-to-back birdies on Nos. 7 and 8, seizing control of the leaderboard from then on. Despite dropping two bogeys after the turn, the world No. 3 closed with a solid 69, sealing a 13-under-par 275 total at Sentosa Golf Club...





BY STAFF WRITER

Lydia Ko finally conquered the LPGA's HSBC Women's World Championship, clinching her first title at her 11th attempt with a dominant four-stroke win over Ayaka Furue and Jeeno Thitikul in final round. The 2024 Olympic gold medalist and Women's British Open champion overcame a middling start before finding her rhythm with a birdie on the par-5 sixth.

Ko added back-to-back birdies on Nos. 7 and 8, seizing control of the leaderboard from then on. Despite dropping two bogeys after the turn, the world No. 3 closed with a solid 69, sealing a 13-under-par 275 total at Sentosa Golf Club.

"I dreamt last night that I won but then I woke up, and I was like, dang, it's not real yet," said Ko, who secured her 23rd LPGA title and her first victory since the Kroger Queen City Championship last September. "But I just wanted to focus on my game."

"I started off really steady, and you know, didn't really put myself in trouble that much. I think that was going to be the key for today." Ko's previous best finish here was a lone second place in 2015. "It's exciting to finally add Asia's major to my major collection," the New Zealander said. World No. 2 Jeeno Thitikul fought hard to chase Ko down, but her charge fell just short.

Jeeno fired a 70, finishing at nine under, tied for second with Japan's Ayaka Furue, who carded a closing 68. The Thai star made an early push with two birdies in the first four holes to trail Ko by a stroke at 9-under but couldn't maintain the pressure. Charley Hull, just one shot behind Ko entering the final round, saw her title hopes fade after a frustrating 74, settling for a share of fourth at seven under alongside Im Jin Hee, who fired the day's best round of 67, and Gaby Lopez (70).

The Singapore tournament is the second of three events on the LPGA's first Asian swing of the year. The final event will be played next week at Hainan Island, China. ■

FEATURE

RED CARPET, FASHION AND MUSIC: F1 LAUNCHES ITS 2025 SEASON HOLLYWOOD STYLE

Lavish team presentations included a James Bond parody for Aston Martin, a line of drummers with glowing sticks, cars sliding down the stage on motorized platforms, a parade of title-winning McLarens, and a comedy skit that played on...





BY STAFF WRITER

Formula 1 kick-started its 75th anniversary season with music, glitz and glamor as the race series aims to reach beyond a sports audience with a two-hour televised arena show. Lewis Hamilton arrived wearing a tie in Ferrari red for his biggest event yet since joining the Italian team, before the seven-time champion emerged to rousing cheers in a full race suit to present the team's livery alongside teammate Charles Leclerc. Asked to pick a word to describe his mood ahead of the new season, Hamilton picked "invigorated, because I feel so full of life and so much energy, because everything's new."

"Just focused on what's up ahead. I'm so proud to be part of the team, something new and exciting for me. The F1 75 Live event at London's O2 arena was the first time the sport hosted its own large-scale launch event, rather than leaving it to the individual teams. Drivers arrived on the red carpet for a show unlike any other event in F1 history which ended with all 20 drivers on a stage transformed into a grid, standing alongside cars in each team's 2025 livery.

Lavish team presentations included a James Bond parody for Aston Martin, a line of drummers with glowing sticks, cars sliding down the stage on motorized platforms, a parade of title-winning McLarens, and a comedy skit that played on Racing Bulls' sponsor-heavy full name. The live crowd of F1 fans brought some unpredictability, with some boos for a mention of the governing body, the FIA, which has been in dispute with drivers over how it enforces punishments for swearing, and for Red Bull team principal Christian Horner. There were also musical acts like country singer Kane Brown, who introduced

Haas, British band Take That. American rapper and singer MGK, also known as Machine Gun Kelly, gave the show a high-energy, guitar-heavy intro. Teams presented their 2025 liveries, but didn't have to show off the actual cars they'll race this season. Teams are still allowed to hold their own launch events to present their 2025 cars, as McLaren and Williams did last week and Ferrari is expected to do Wednesday.

It comes at a time when F1 is keen to expand beyond a sports audience, with races in cities like Miami and Las Vegas, a movie called "F1" starring Brad Pitt releasing in June, and the ongoing popularity of the "Drive To Survive" series on Netflix. "To have this many fans out shows that we bring the sport together away from the racetrack. There's a lot of excitement," McLaren chief executive Zak Brown said.

"The Brad Pitt movie will no doubt create a huge amount of awareness for the sport. Netflix, I'm sure, knowing what happened last year, will be a drama-filled television show again, which has been great for all of us. So I think the sport's going from strength to strength."

Drivers broadly welcomed the new launch show, though two-time champion Fernando Alonso warned it could be "a little bit of distraction" at a time when drivers and teams are fine-tuning their approach to the season. Asked if he thought the launch would become a regular event, Horner said: "I'm sure if they think they can make some money out of it, we'll be doing this most years."

F1's preparations for the new season — which marks the series' 75th anniversary — continue with preseason testing next week at the Bahrain International Circuit. The first race is the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne on March 16. ■

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